

i should point out that i am not taking issue with runners seeking out difficult races,  
or making comparisons of relative race difficulty.  
this all seems valid.  
this is who we are.  
this is what we do.

i do not think that it is appropriate for race management to advertise any race as; "the world's toughest"

such claims are entirely subjective,  
and i believe are motivated by the desire to justify ridiculous race fees.  
many of the events, while certainly making extreme physical demands,  
are ultimately feats of finance, technology, and outside assistance.

the objective of the barkley is to be difficult.  
but no one has ever "bought" their way in,  
and once here, they are allowed pretty limited technology.  
outside assistance is limited to those times spent off the course between loops.  
it is meant to be a test of physical endurance,  
self reliance,  
back country skills,  
and the ability to cope, emotionally, with adversity and uncertainty.  
that said, the opponent is only the natural world.  
no obstacles are constructed,  
and no "requirements" are devised to make it more unpleasant or difficult than it naturally is.  
just as the checkpoints are not actually "hidden."  
the barkley is supposed to present the same sort of challenges  
that our species has faced since the beginning of time.  
you can climb & descend the hills as easily as your conditioning and technique allow.  
you can find your way and locate the checkpoints as easily as your navigational skills enable.  
and you can remain as comfortable, under weather conditions that will be whatever they will be,  
as your back-country skills and preparation permit.  
and, if you can remain focused and coherent enough during an extended period of extreme distress,  
and you have all those skills and preparation...

you can finish.

those who make the attempt have earned my respect  
(even tho it might be fueled by foolish bravado & not really realizing what it will be like "out there")  
those who have the skills and physical preparation to make it around even one loop

impress the hell out of me.

those who have the balls to keep returning into the bleak hell of the course,  
until the time limits force them to stop,  
awe me....

and those who have the combination of skills, preparation,  
and whatever superhuman ability it takes,  
to finish.

i feel honored merely to bear witness to such an achievement.

most of us will find our limits,  
somewhere out there, well short of 100 miles.

barkley is a chance to get a measure of ourselves.

whether it is the "worlds toughest footrace" is something for the runners to talk about.

Laz